

Pentecostal-Charismatic Diversity: Exploring Similarities and Differences

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I am in the process of learning about Pentecostal-Charismatic factors relevant to mental health and mental illness. In this process, I am looking at categories of beliefs, practices, experiences, and values that might make a difference in understanding concepts of mental illness and preferred or acceptable treatments. Following are examples of the four categories.

Beliefs

Jesus work on the cross procured the right to be healed (Isaiah 53:5; [AG](#)).

People who do not accept Jesus Christ as their personal savior will spend an eternity in hell. (e.g., B. [Graham](#); [AG](#))

When Christians die, they enter the presence of Jesus and will be united with their loved ones.

The Bible is the Word of God. It is infallible and an all sufficient guide for life (e.g., [AG](#); BG in [Decision](#); [COGIC](#))

A Christian marriage is a covenant between one man and one woman. God hates divorce. The Bible limits acceptable reasons for remarriage following divorce. ([AG](#))

Homosexuality is Sin (e.g., [AG, 2014](#))

The devil is real. Demons can influence and possess people. ([AG](#); [COGIC](#))

Practices

Healing by anointing with oil at a church altar plus prayer by pastor and elders (James 5:14); [COGIC](#))

Deliverance: Pastor interview, special prayer group, commanding demon to come out (Luke 9)

Daily devotions of prayer and Bible reading; Prayers before meals, prayers at bedtime. And using one's prayer language (i.e., glossolalia).

Foot washing (e.g., [COGIC](#))

Experiences

God spoke to me and told me to...

I have known things about people that only God could know

I have spoken a prophecy

I had a dream and...

I saw an angel in the room and...

Values

The Holy Bible. (e.g., [AG](#); BG in [Decision](#))

Pastors as the untouchable Lord's anointed ones. (e.g., [Charisma](#))

The sanctity of marriage. ([AG](#))

The sanctity of life (e.g., [AG](#))

Sexual purity. (e.g., [AG, 2014](#); [NAE](#))

Tithing (e.g., [APC](#))

There are many more examples. There are studies looking at links between some of the above beliefs and practices to health and mental health.

Groups and Identities

Religious groups are a major source of personal identity for committed Christians. Subgroups of Pentecostal-Charismatic Christians evolve as larger numbers of individuals increasingly reject the way most believers in a group live out their beliefs.

Diversity: I find that Pentecostal-Charismatic Christians vary in how they understand their beliefs. Often their differences with non-Pentecostals appears more a matter of emphasis.

Groupings: I find evidence supporting three groups of Pentecostal-Charismatic Christians with overlapping features. That is, the boundaries are fluid. I think we can track various beliefs to see how they vary from one group to another. But I have not done all this work.

Cringeworthy: I find that many have become too uncomfortable with their groups such that they either leave for another group or drop out altogether—some do not want to be associated with the label Pentecostal or Charismatic because of what the label means to others.

The Groups

Fundamentalists: Some take most or all beliefs quite literally (e.g., demon possession, avoiding evil).

In between, some hedge their bets considering for example biological and psychological causes of mental illness but not eliminating demonic forces.

Evangelicalized: Others attempt to blend traditional beliefs with science as in the case of divine healing plus medical science.

Some are in transition from retaining traditional beliefs to embracing a more metaphorical perspective and giving more weight to science when it comes to practical matters of health, mental health, etc.

Progressives: Still others interpret biblical language in terms of hyperboles, metaphors, and the like. They give greater weight to science when describing nature.